

## The \$10,000 Prize



*Texas universities  
launch low-cost degrees*

By Brian Wellborn

With about \$10,000, you could get a new Nissan Versa. Or a business-class plane ticket from Dallas to Dubai. Or — at some Texas institutions — a college degree.

It's hardly news that college tuition has skyrocketed, in Texas and across the nation, but several recently announced, affordable college degrees in Texas are making headlines.

In February 2011, after years of steep tuition increases, Texas Gov. Rick Perry challenged Texas higher universities to develop bachelor's degree programs costing no more than \$10,000, including textbooks. Since then, Texas universities have attempted to meet the challenge.

## Preparing Future Scientists at UTPB

[The University of Texas of the Permian Basin \(UTPB\)](#) developed its Texas Science Scholars Program both to meet the \$10,000 challenge and to help address state workforce needs, according to President W. David Watts. The program will be available beginning in fall 2012 to students who meet certain [challenging prerequisites](#) and seek degrees in chemistry, computer science, geology, information systems and mathematics.

“A number of factors led to the decision for the \$10,000 [degree] to be in the science fields,” Watts says. “The addition of a new, state-of-the-art Science and Technology building gives UTPB the capacity to increase majors in the physical and computing sciences. Texas needs educated graduates in the physical sciences. Many employers cannot find the educated workers that they need for Texas to grow its economy.”

Watts estimates that the Texas Science Scholars Program will serve up to 400 science students at a time, with up to 100 students each in the freshman, sophomore, junior and senior classes. After the college assesses the program’s impact, other degree programs, including those in the liberal arts, also may be offered for the \$10,000 rate.

“Success will be determined by the increase in degrees awarded in the physical sciences and math compared to historical trends,” Watts says. “Texas needs more STEM [science, technology, engineering and mathematics] graduates. An increase in students, retention and graduation rates are metrics, but the major outcome measure will be the increase in degrees awarded.”

Watts says other Texas universities are looking to the Texas Science Scholars Program as a model in crafting their own \$10,000 degree programs.

“UT Permian Basin has had many schools ask about the \$10,000 Texas Science Scholars Program,” Watts says. “We know many schools are looking at ways to offer \$10,000 degrees. Texas universities are concerned with student success, including the cost to students.”

According to Watts, while the Texas Science Scholars Program does not include the cost of books in its \$2,500 annual tuition and fees, other grant programs may be used for texts.

The UTPB program is unique in Texas in that it will be offered entirely by and at the university. A more common arrangement involves collaboration between universities and community



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college systems.

## Reaching the Goal in San Antonio

“When Governor Perry challenged us about making education affordable, we said, ‘We can do it,’” according to a statement from Dr. Maria Hernandez Ferrier, president of [Texas A&M University – San Antonio \(TAMU–SA\)](#). “But we need to do it with partners. We need to do it with K–12, with community colleges and then us.”

The San Antonio program will offer bachelor of applied arts and sciences degrees with an emphasis on information technology. Participating students will take 60 hours of dual-credit courses in high school, followed by 27 credit hours at [Alamo Colleges](#). They’ll finish their degrees by taking 36 credit hours at TAMU–SA. The university says the degree will cost less than \$10,000.

“This degree plan is an excellent representation of how our education institutions are working together to meet the high demand for skilled graduates in the information technology and security fields,” Ferrier says.

Students can enter the degree track as early as fall 2012, by taking college-level coursework in high schools in the San Antonio, Judson and Comal independent school districts.

## Texas State: A Bit from Column A, a Bit from Column B

In mid-July, the [Texas State University System](#) announced its own plan to meet the governor’s challenge, employing some cost-saving techniques taken from both UTPB’s and TAMU–SA’s affordable degree programs.

Texas State’s 10K Scholars Program will serve students who take dual credit courses in high school, attend [Southwest Texas Junior College](#) and finish up a math or science degree at [Sul Ross State University Rio Grande College \(SRSU–RGC\)](#). Students can complete the program for \$10,000, with scholarships factored into the final price.

As with UTPB’s program, the 10K Scholars Program will provide degrees only in math and sciences, specifically biology, chemistry and mathematics.

“College graduates with degrees in STEM fields are in high demand,” says Brian McCall, Texas State University System chancellor. “These degree programs are also among the most popular at Sul Ross Rio Grande College, so the 10K Scholars Program will be available to a relatively large number of students



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who meet the qualifying criteria.”

And as with TAMU–SA’s affordable degree program, potential 10K Scholars will need to clear a number of hurdles in high school and junior college before arriving at their destinations. According to the Texas State system, students must complete high school with a grade-point average of 2.5 or higher, and complete 30 dual credit hours applicable toward a degree. Participants then must go on to complete 30 credit hours at Southwest Texas Junior College, before taking their final 60 hours at SRSU–RGC.

McCall says success with the 10K Scholars Program could lead to additional affordable degree offerings in the Texas State University System.

“If a \$10,000 degree can be achieved without sacrificing the quality of a student’s education, then I expect we might see additional offerings in the future,” McCall says.



Brian McCall, Texas State University System chancellor

## COLLEGE COST COMPARISONS

Curious how Texas’ largest universities compare on costs? This table compares annual costs among the 10 largest public and private universities, based on enrollment. The figures represent average costs for dependent students living off campus who enroll in 15 credit hours in both fall and spring. (Universities are ranked in descending order of enrollment size.)

Texas Public University Average Annual Costs (2012–2013)

Campus	Resident tuition and fees	Books and supplies	Room and board	Transportation	Personal Expenses	Total
The University of Texas at Austin	\$9,794	\$904	\$10,946	\$1,242	\$2,510	\$25,396
Texas A&M University	\$8,480	\$1,272	\$8,400	\$500	\$2,234	\$20,886
University of Houston	\$9,311	\$1,200	\$10,200	\$2,800	\$2,700	\$26,211
University of North Texas	\$9,078	\$1,000	\$6,886	\$2,238	\$2,000	\$21,202
Texas State University - San Marcos	\$8,770	\$1,090	\$7,740	\$1,350	\$2,180	\$21,130
The University of Texas at Arlington	\$9,152	\$1,160	\$7,708	\$2,664	\$1,574	\$22,258
Texas Tech University	\$9,242	\$1,200	\$8,464	\$2,300	\$2,120	\$23,326
The University of Texas at San Antonio	\$8,790	\$1,000	\$8,235	\$2,760	\$1,800	\$22,585
The University of Texas at El Paso	\$7,044	\$1,418	\$11,490	\$2,100	\$1,722	\$23,774

<b>Campus</b>	<b>Resident tuition and fees</b>	<b>Books and supplies</b>	<b>Room and board</b>	<b>Transportation</b>	<b>Personal Expenses</b>	<b>Total</b>
The University of Texas-Pan American	\$6,124	\$1,000	\$7,544	\$2,924	\$1,926	\$19,518
Average Texas Public University Costs	\$7,380	\$1,185	\$8,349	\$2,099	\$2,118	\$21,131

Texas Private University Average Annual Costs (2012–2013)

<b>Campus</b>	<b>Resident tuition and fees</b>	<b>Books and supplies</b>	<b>Room and board</b>	<b>Transportation</b>	<b>Personal Expenses</b>	<b>Total</b>
Baylor University	\$33,916	\$1,364	\$10,468	\$2,444	\$3,440	\$51,632
Southern Methodist University	\$41,750	\$800	\$7,500	\$1,000	\$1,600	\$52,650
Texas Christian University	\$34,590	\$1,200	\$10,650	\$420	\$1,500	\$48,360
University of the Incarnate Word of San Antonio	\$23,690	\$1,200	\$5,862	\$1,252	\$1,694	\$33,698
Rice University	\$37,287	\$800	\$12,600	\$600	\$1,550	\$52,837
Dallas Baptist University	\$20,910	\$2,220	\$9,756	\$2,844	\$1,899	\$37,629
St. Edward's University	\$31,110	\$1,100	\$9,344	\$900	\$1,846	\$44,300
Abilene Christian University	\$26,770	\$1,100	\$8,650	\$1,450	\$1,930	\$39,900
Wayland Baptist University	\$14,630	\$1,500	\$8,550	\$1,580	\$1,992	\$28,252
St. Mary's University of San Antonio	\$24,226	\$1,300	\$4,000	\$800	\$1,600	\$31,926
Average Texas Private University Costs	\$23,045	\$1,115	\$7,378	\$1,376	\$1,651	\$34,565

Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's College for All Texans website

Note: Information is based on average costs for dependent students living off campus who enroll in 15 credit hours in both fall and spring. The data are taken from college student budgets provided by each institution's office of financial aid. Questions regarding these data should be directed to the institution. Texas private universities report the same tuition and fees costs for both residents and nonresidents.

## Other Paths to the Goal

While the programs at TAMU–SA, UTPB and the Texas State University System offer the most publicized \$10,000 degrees, other state universities are using innovative and cost-saving strategies to meet or work toward the governor's challenge.

Stephenville's Tarleton State University has partnered with Tarrant County College to offer two interdisciplinary degrees for less than \$10,000, a bachelor of science in applied science (BSAS) degree in business administration and a bachelor of

applied arts and sciences (BAAS) in business occupations. The degrees require coursework at Tarrant County College as well as real-world work experience or technical training.

Texas A&M University – Commerce and South Texas College are jointly developing a degree program in which students must gain and demonstrate particular competencies, rather than completing specific coursework, to earn a \$10,000 bachelor's degree in organizational leadership. (The degree is also available solely through South Texas College.) Educators and area businesses and industries will work together to establish the performance levels needed to complete the degree.

Another relatively low-cost option is Western Governors University Texas, an online university offering accredited, competency-based coursework leading to bachelor's degrees in information technology, business, health careers and teaching. Intended primarily for working adults who already have some college credit under their belts, the program charges a flat rate of \$3,100 per six-month term. Students can complete as many course as they can in each term and earn credit by passing a competency exam.

*To learn about saving for higher education, visit the Comptroller's [Every Chance Every Texan](#) Web portal. For more information about higher education costs in Texas, visit the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's website, [College For All Texans](#).*

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